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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2353
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2182
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkey Commemorates Dardanelles Campaign

All papers report Turkey on Sunday marked the 92nd anniversary of the victory over a combined British-French fleet trying to pass through the Dardanelles (Canakkale) to Istanbul during World War I. Prime Minister Erdogan participated in the ceremonies on the Gallipoli Peninsula. President Sezer stated in his speech on the Dardanelles Campaign that the Turkish nation had gained a respected place among the international community. Sezer also emphasized the principle of secularism in his speech. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief Yasar Buyukanit, in a statement to commemorate the martyrs of war, said the Turkish military would continue to counter all threats directed at Turkey. Meanwhile, families of soldiers killed in clashes with the PKK also attended the ceremonies in Canakkale. Another ceremony was held at Ataturk's mausoleum in Ankara, joined by at least 25,000 people including Turkish military personnel and the relatives of soldiers killed in action. Ceremonies were also held across the country on Sunday.

Tensions Rising on Nevruz Eve

All papers report tensions are on the rise on the eve of Nevruz celebrations across Turkey. Justice Minister Cemil Cicek warned against provocative attempts during the celebrations. In Ankara, a group was denied permission to hold a demonstration over the weekend, and will probably hold it March 25. In Istanbul over the weekend, police detained 22 and used tear gas to disperse demonstrators chanting slogans supporting jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in a separate event to celebrate Nevruz.

Anti-PKK Operations

In synchronized police operations against the PKK in Istanbul and the nearby province of Kocaeli, 12 members were detained. Police seized 12 kilos of A-4 plastic explosives, 10 detonators and documents on the PKK propaganda in the search of the party members' houses.

Ankara Wants Iraqi Kurds to Release Iraqi Turkmen

The leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has given a file to US counter-terrorism envoy Joseph Ralston for the release of the jailed Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) security chief Emir Izzettin, who was sentenced to life in prison in northern Iraq. Ralston has reportedly conveyed the file to the regional Kurdish administration president Massoud Barzani. Iraqi sources said Izzettin could be released within the scope of a general amnesty to be declared by Barzani on the eve of Nevruz. Izzettin, a former Iraqi army captain, had defected and went to Erbil to work as the head of security for the ITF. He was detained, as a warning to Turkey, on the eve of the March 1, 2003, vote in the Turkish Parliament, as claims were being made that Turkish troops could enter northern Iraq. Izzettin was sentenced to life in prison despite the fact that no concrete evidence could be found against him.

Editorial Commentary: Fourth Anniversary of the War in Iraq
Necati Dogru writes in the mainstream daily Vatan: "The US action started with an argument for democracy and ended up with bloodshed. This is also a very bad for the US because Iraq has turned into a Vietnam-like swamp. Interestingly enough, despite the fact that everything became pro-American in Iraq, including a puppet government and puppet security forces and judiciary, the American presence there still requires around 70,000 armed men for security purposes. As for the democracy argument, the events during the last four years worked for everything but democracy. Shiite leader al-Sadr organized an armed force. Al Qaeda immensely increased its power. The terrorist attacks increased seven times more than before. Iran gained regional controlling power. And the dictators of the region, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, enjoyed reinforcing their dictatorship after the US invasion of Iraq. The US, once known as the world's superpower, is like a paper

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tiger after these four years."

Messages from US on Joint Operations against the PKK
Hurriyet: Columnist Fatih Cekirge reports that three important messages came from the US during AKP Deputy Egemen Bagis's recent trip to the US as part of a Parliamentary delegation to lobby against the passage of the Armenian resolution. Bagis said he had met with the Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns and Burns gave the delegation three important messages, messages which Bagis thought were conveyed to Ankara officially just a short time ago: first, General Ralston has completed all the preparations for an operation against the PKK; second, the Administration will do its best not to allow the passage of the Armenian resolution in Congress; and third, the US will start an initiative to lift the embargo on northern Cyprus.

DTP Sends Letters of Complaint to Officials

Sabah reports that leaders of the Democratic Community Party (DTP), Turkey's main Kurdish party, sent letters to PM Erdogan, Justice Minister Cicek, Interior Minister Aksu, Chairmen of the Court of Cassation, Constitutional Court and State Prosecutor's Office, complaining that legal pressure against the DTP offices had increased and that investigations were launched against almost every DTP district office just after the party announced its intension to participate in the upcoming elections by fielding independent candidates.

TV News:
(NTV, 8 A.M.)

Domestic News

- A delegation of Turkish lawmakers said after wrapping up talks in Washington that the atmosphere in the US is changing in favor of Turkey with regard to the Armenian genocide resolution.

- On Monday, the international donor community of 19 countries, the UN, the World Bank, and the IMF will gather in Istanbul for the fifth round of Iraq Reconstruction Forum to support Iraqi reconstruction efforts and to enhance partnerships with the Iraqi government.

- Armenian Culture Minister Hasmik Poghosian said she will participate in the inauguration of the newly renovated Akhdamar Church in Van on March 29.

- 178 illegal migrants were captured in the western coastal town of Ayvalik.

International News

- The UN Security Council has agreed to allow President Ahmadinejad to speak in defense of Iran's nuclear program at a session to be held next week in New York.

- Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer said the EU was not ready for Turkey's membership. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Turkey's EU accession was not the best solution.

- Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said he will not work with the new Palestinian government, but pledged to maintain limited contacts with President Abbas.

- A Catalan newspaper survey shows about 60 percent of Spaniards want government peace talks reopened with the separatist group ETA.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON